

ATV Adventures! Fit To Ride

Chapter Six

Riding with a Clear Head

Quick Prep for Instructors

Background Information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) list six categories of health-risk behavior in youth, including “behaviors that result in injuries.” Some youth engage in unsafe use of ATVs. Such risk-taking behavior includes:

- * Jumping over ground depressions;
- * Dodging other vehicles;
- * Drinking alcohol or using drugs while riding;¹
- * Speeding or racing other vehicles;
- * Carrying passengers;
- * Jumping over hills without an awareness of the topography on the other side;
- * Riding at night;
- * Riding without proper safety gear, including helmets.

Some researchers tag adolescents as sensation seeking.² Others say that youth do risky things to appear more mature, more like adults.³ Still other researchers say it's a combination of factors that lead youth to look for risk, whether they are riding ATVs recklessly or using drugs. (Note: Don't forget that plenty of adults also take risks while riding ATVs.)

But just because some youth engage in risky behavior doesn't mean the majority does. As a leader, you can help youth understand it's normal to ride safe and free from the affect of alcohol or drugs.⁴ Focus on the important point that it's normal to safely ride with a clear head!

Major Points of Chapter Activities

Activity A focuses on the effects of using alcohol or drugs, which slow reaction times and impair skills. Activity B encourages youth to avoid risks by helping them understand it's *normal* to avoid them, and letting them explore whether they wish to be role models or risk models.

¹ Of course, anyone under the age of 21 should not be using alcohol under any circumstance, including riding, and no one should ever be under the influence of illicit drugs.

² Zuckerman, M., S.B.G. Eysenck, and H.J. Eysenck. “Sensational Seeking in England and America: Cross-cultural, Age, and Sex Comparisons.” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 46:139-49, 1978.

³ Jessor, R. “Problem behavior theory, psychosocial development, and adolescent problem drinking.” *British Journal of Addiction* 82:331-42, 1987.

⁴ Of course, you can focus on the risks of using alcohol or drugs under any circumstances, and not just while riding an ATV.

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Activity B CORE

Are You a Role Model?

Objectives: Participants interpret their behavior to analyze whether they are risk models or role models.

Life Skills: Critical thinking, healthy lifestyle choices, self-motivation

ATV Safety Message: ATV riders can be role models for others by making good decisions, such as avoiding alcohol and illicit drugs.

Number of Participants: Three to 40

Ages: 7th to 10th grade. Younger participants may not be able to do the self-assessment, but you can try it with them if you wish.

Time: 30 minutes

Location: Indoors or outdoors

Teaching Strategies: Adults and teens as partners can plan and lead the activity.

Materials Needed:

* Photocopies of the *Are You a Role Model? Quiz*

* Chalkboard and chalk, whiteboard and markers, or flipchart and markers

Activity Background

The risk of injury associated with ATV use has ridden steadily in recent years. Some think that the increasing use of ATVs for play versus work has led to a disregard of safety and an emphasis on fun and excitement by users. Many small studies do reinforce this idea—the incidence of injury is much greater on weekends and holidays than during the week.⁵ Another explanation may be the proliferation of extreme sports, where users push their motorized and non-motorized vehicles to the limit with disregard for personal safety.

You can encourage youth to avoid risks, such as drinking alcohol or using drugs, by emphasizing that *most* people avoid accidents and harm while riding ATVs—they don't want to wind up in the hospital!⁶ Safe riders are role models, not risk models. This activity helps participants take a look at their behavior to determine which model they are holding up to others.

⁵ Gibbs, Lynn, David Lawrence, and Brigg Reilley. "ATV-Related Central Nervous System Injuries in Louisiana." *Journal of Louisiana State Medical Society, Inc.* Available at www.injurypreventionweb.org/states/la/atv/atv.htm.

⁶ Be sure to make the point they shouldn't be using alcohol under other circumstances, either, if they are under 21.

Start Here

Begin by asking participants to define the term *role model*. They also may wish to name some people they consider role models. Which traits do role models have in common? Record this information on a flipchart or chalkboard/whiteboard.

<Illustration of staggered words such as *strong, understanding, talented, determined, competitive, etc.*>

Now ask participants to define the term *risk model*. Prompt them by asking them to name some traits of a person they consider to be unsafe, a showoff, or someone trying too hard. Record this information in a separate area on a flipchart or chalkboard/whiteboard.

<Illustration of staggered words such as *chip on shoulder, needs attention, loud, short temper, etc.*>

Do the Activity

Ask participants to think about this question: Do you think you have any of the following traits of either group? Hand out copies of the *Are You a Role Model? Quiz*. Ask everyone to take a few minutes to fill it out privately and score the results.

Reflect

Ask:

- Were they surprised by the results? Do they agree with them?

Apply

Ask participants:

- Is it easier to be a risk or role model?
- Which model, do you think, is more likely to ride an ATV safely and avoid injuries or even death?
- Which model would you like to be? Why?
- Which model would you like your siblings to emulate?
- Which model do you think most people are?

Ideas to Involve Parents and/or Other Community Members

Ask participants to name and describe their role models. They can draw a picture of this person or make a collage representing this person and his/her values. Ask participants to share their artwork with their parents or other adults in their homes.

You may wish to further share some ways to be a role model with participants. *Character Counts!*, a 4-H program designed to promote character education, lists the following as the *Six Pillars of Character*:

- Trustworthiness: Be honest, reliable, and have the courage to do the right thing.
- Respect: Treat others with respect, use good manners and respectful language, and deal peacefully with anger.
- Responsibility: Do what you are supposed to do and always do your best.
- Fairness: Play by the rules, and don't take advantage of or blame others.
- Caring: Be kind, compassionate, and grateful.
- Citizenship: Help make your community better, obey laws, and protect the environment.

Discuss this list with the group and ask them to self-assess how many of these traits they possess and demonstrate.

What Did We Learn?

Fill in the matrix, evaluating how the group performed. Use the results to re-emphasize skills missed in future activities.

	Performed Well	No Opinion	Performed Poorly
Were able to understand the difference between risk and role models.			
Had the intention of becoming a role model.			

Note: You may identify individuals who are having trouble understanding key points or gaining skills. Use teen or adult leaders to provide special help and encouragement to these individuals.

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Activity B CORE - Are You a Role Model? Quiz

Check the column that best describes your behavior while riding ATVs. If you haven't ridden an ATV before, check the column that best applies to your overall personality.

Q1	A) Leap before you look.	B) Look before you leap, because you think having bolts holding your leg together is uncool.
Q2	A) Try to get lots of people to watch you.	B) Don't care if others watch you—you don't need piles of praise to feel good.
Q3	A) Let others talk you into doing things, such as drinking alcohol, against your better judgment.	B) Make a decision and then make that decision yours.
Q4	A) Say "uh-oh" while watching others do stupid things. You feel pity for them, not pride or envy.	B) Utter the phrase "uh-oh" in the middle of a stunt.
Q5	A) Take chances because you feel insecure.	B) Figure out what you want and go for it, taking some chances in life that involve your brain more than your body.
Q6	A) Care a little about what others think, but mostly care about how you see yourself.	B) Need lots of people to think you are wild to feel good about yourself.
Q7	A) Practice good riding skills when operating an ATV.	B) Do stunts to feel the adrenaline rush.

Scoring:

- Q1. Score 0 points for A, 3 points for B.
- Q2. Score 0 points for A, 3 points for B.
- Q3. Score 0 points for A, 3 points for B.
- Q4. Score 3 points for A, 0 points for B.
- Q5. Score 0 points for A, 3 points for B.
- Q6. Score 3 points for A, 0 points for B.
- Q7. Score 3 points for A, 0 points for B

Totals:

- 21 points You are a role model!
- 18 points You are trying to be a role model. Keep working on your decision-making skills.
- 15 points You are trying to decide whether to be someone to look up to or someone splatted over the ground. Go for the role model.
- Under 15 points You are a risk model. You stand out, but not in a good way.